

The Treacherous Nature of
F. Lally

14 Sept 1728 S. M. M.
Plains

29 Chapt Proverbs 5 Verse

A Man that flattereth his
neighbour, spreadeth a
net for his Feet.

The weakness of the human
heart exposes it to innume-
rable dangers. Constant
attention is necessary to
preserve it secure, because
it is often attacked on the
most unsuspecting side.
Your minds were as
pure

pure, and our hearts as
firm, as the perfections
our nature requires, we
should not be ^{reduced} ~~reduced~~ to
the sad necessity of dreading
not only the errors and follies
of mankind, but their truth,
when it is agreeable and
glattering. But the conceit
and vanity, which all men
have in some degree,
renders truth itself often

dangerous.

It is the prerogative of God
alone to receive praise
without danger. Thou God
art praised and to thee
shall the vow be performed.
He hears, and is pleased to hear,
the endless hymns of his angels.
He hears the voice of praise
ascending from all nature:
the infinite variety of beings
celebrate him, according
to their different Powers,

as the great, the merciful
God, and the only object of
supreme love, he reserves
those truths without prejudice
to his holiness, because
being in himself essentially
holy and pure,
these attributes will always
coincide.

It is far otherwise
with us: unstable ourselves
as water, our very virtues

Partake of this Instability;
whence ariseth the necessity,
if we judge wisely, of our
suspecting every thing
that flatters us, as, accordi-
ng to the custom of the
world, which we know
but too well, there is nothing
in general more seduc-
tive and deceitful,
and of all delusions,
there is none more
than that in the Eyes of
men.

Men, no more pernicious
in the sight of God, than
that which, by the sugges-
tions of self love, makes
us take of all good for truth,
and think ourselves more
rightly, than we ought
to think.

The words of the Prophet,
addressed to the Jews, may be
universally applied. My
People, they who call

you blessed deceive you.
they who affect to praise
to applaud, to call you
happy and perfect, these
impose upon you, and
abuse your credulity. In
fact what are ^{es}aptitudes
in the common style of
the world? obliging fal-
shoods, officious exasperations,
extravagant signs of
apparent esteem, proce-
eding

neither from reason, nor from
the heart: often disguised
insinuations, covered with
a veil of sincerity, plausible
and honorable terms, but
signifying nothing, the
spring of vanity, and
the deception of self love.

People tell us, what we
ought to be, rather than
what we are, and we by
a pitiable blindness

of running into the snare
which is spread for us, believ-
ing, ourselves to be indeed
what adulation repre-
sents us. Flattering
portraits, are made of our
persons; they are made
pleasing, and we believe
them natural; vast applau-
se is given of our talents,
which are only compli-
ments, and figures, but we
fail not to take them

them literally: Praises are
bestowed even on our Vices,
and Passions, and we do not
hesitate to count them for
Virtues. — Some learned
men have very plausibly
ascribed the origin of those
idolatrious superstitions that
prevail so long in the world
to this abuse of which I speak.
to that inclination which
men have of believing

what is advantageous,
however incredible it may
really be. Certain men were
told they were Gods, and by
often hearing this told them,
they became accustomed
to be honoured and treated
as Gods. Those who first
held that language to them
knew very well, that it was
false; yet from a spirit of
flattery, they performed every
action, that they would

otherwise have done from
a spirit of sincerity, had
they been convinced
that what they spoke
were true.

We dare not say, that
this error is entirely destroy-
ed even by Christianity.
Vestiges of it remain every
where, and a species of Idolatry
is established by the
custom of the World.

We tell the Rich and the
great no more that they
are Gods, but we tell them
that they are not as other
men are: that they want
those Weaknesses which
others have, and possess those
Qualities which others want;
we separate them so far from
the rest of mankind, that,
forgetting what they are,
they think themselves Gods.

not considering that their
admirers are interested
persons, determined to please
them. Nor may we confine
ourselves to the great and
powerful ones of the world
to justify this observation.

The Idolatry I speak of
reigns equally in the
lower conditions, and
produces there propor-
tioned effects. Thus

a fake or a foolish friend
by habitual compliances,
becomes imitator of his
friend, hiding from him
the most salutary of all
views, which is, the view
of himself, and leading
his mind into as many
errors as he says to him
soft and agreeable
things. What are ^{by} ~~pro~~

speaking, those public
orations, those falsehoods
~~and~~ flattery, and words
of eloquence, triumph
with impunity over
truth? What are those
public addresses, where by
the caprice of the author
the most obscure men
are exalted to the most
shining; where the most

Indifferent Virtue is
considered as the most
Eminent: Where there is
no Courtier, who is not
worthy of governing the
State, no Churchman who
does not deserve the Pulpit.
What are these, but a
mercenary sacrifice of
excessive praises to the
infatuation of men.

We know well, that truth
is the ~~last~~ ^{best} thing we need

need look for in these great
performances; and yet by the
corruption of self-love,
which can prevail
over all, we easily
imagine them to be
Partly true. —

The contradiction is,
that in the midst of all
this, those men so vain,
and so passionate for
glory, never cease

to protest, that the thing
they abhor most, is to
be deceived. In the
mean time, they wish
to be praised, flattered,
and admired. as if flattery
adulation could possibly
be separated. They love
not deceit, but they love
applause, which in its
very nature is deceit-
ful: whence it is evident

however strange it may
seem, that mankind
reckon it a high measure
to be deceived by one
another, and are mutually
thankful for this extra-
ordinary favour.

What resolutions then
can we take to avoid
these errors? we must
resolve to distrust
even truth; when it seems

to flatter us: because there
is no appearance of truth
which approacheth so
near to falsehood, nor is
so difficult to be disting-
-uished from falsehood;
and consequently, there is
none so much exposed to
dangers of falsehood. To be
the dupe of false applause
we know, is sufficient to
make a man disliked
of all the world, and the

most ridiculous Character
on Earth is he who is puff
up with the persuasions of
Imaginary worth. If however
we had nothing but the
world to fear, perhaps we
might bring ourselves,
by our very pride and
vanity to disregard the
operations. But how shall
we answer God when
he shall reproach us
for seeking flattery, and

Encouraging deceit, for
listening to the voice of
the charmer, and living in
perpetual error. Shall we
like Adam, throw the blame
upon others, and say that men
have beguiled us? But
will not God, the severe
though equitable judge,
discover that we have
only been beguiled by our
own vanity. Bitter were
it for us never to hear

Such truths. Better were they
buried in obscurity, if they
render us haughty towards
our Brethren, and forgetful
of our God! How many
have been poisoned by the
conceit of their own wealth,

Jesus Himself, who
according to the Scripture
was the firm and Immuta^{va}
ble rock, to whom the praise
of the Universe here due,

as the attribute of his of
his Supreme Perfections;
yet while on Earth, would
not suffer those truths which
made for his honour and
glory. He wrought wonders.
He cured the blind and
deaf; he raised the dead;
yet when the People begged to
celebrate his name for this;
and to cry, that he was the
Prophet of God, he enjoined

them Silence, and seemed
extremely impatient of
applause. Even the
Demons did he extend
this modesty, and when
those Spirits, forced by
his omnipotent word
left the bodies they had
possest, exclaimed that
he was the There rebuked
them, and suffered them
not to proceed. Instead
of receiving the homage

which was offered to his
Power. He used his power
to forbid, and reject it.
Was there any danger
for him in being praised?
Doubtless there was none;
but there might have been
for us; and because he
came to be our pattern in
all things, to supply the
weakness of our nature,
by the sanctity of his exam-
ple.

The hummed world to praise
that we might be instructed
to dread those who by flatter-
ing deceive and destroy
us: for perfection being a
work of constancy and diffi-
culty, whose principal
exercise consists in ad-
vancing we must every day
labour with care: and if
we could intermit this toil
with honour and safety,

we would certainly doubt with
Joy. But to this, the immo-
-date praised of Men
infallibly lead us, for it ma-
kes us believe ourselves to
be far advanced, and endan-
gers an immediate
recoil. St Paul testified
as he was in grace & wrote
thus to the Philippians:
Brethren, I count not myself
to have attained perfection

But this I do! forgetting
those things which are
behind, and reaching
forth to those things which
are before. I press towards
the mark for the Prize of
the high calling. We observe
a conduct very different, and
very opposite to this of the
Apostle. We regard with
secular satisfaction
the little good we have

already done, and almost
entirely forget the great
things, which remain
for us yet to do. —

To avoid so fatal a
blindness, let us fix this
great Maxim in our
minds. That a flatterer is
worse than a declared
enemy, and that every
truth must be disputed
or at least not received

with eagerness when it flatters
us. Let us forget our
good works. God is just and
will remember them, but
let our sins be ever in
our sight. The contempla-
tion of our own merits
may be pleasing, but
it is dangerous: it tends
to overweening pride;
good deeds sanctify us,
and wicked deeds corrupt
us.

and nothing is so proper
to sanctify us, as the remem-
brance of our sins:
as it had by a particular
providence, I had inclined
to give this consolation
to the sinner, that the
severe remembrance of
his sin may be made
its remedy. While the remem-
brance of his good
deeds, is a perpetual

temptation to the just.

But even this temptation
serves a great End, & it
obliges us to continual
watchfulness and constan-
cy. to dread the tongue
of the Flatterer, to distrust
our own claims, and to
depend alone upon the
God of eternal merit.

which that all Love
witness may do God

his infinite mercy Grant
through Jesus Thour
Lord — Amen —